

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

DIVERSION

(Feet)

CODE 362

DEFINITION

A channel constructed across the slope generally with a supporting ridge on the lower side.

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied as part of a resource management system to support one or more of the following purposes.

- Break up concentrations of water on long slopes, on undulating land surfaces, and on land that is generally considered too flat or irregular for terracing.
- Divert water away from farmsteads, agricultural waste systems, and other improvements.
- Collect or direct water for water-spreading or water-harvesting systems.
- Increase or decrease the drainage area above ponds.
- Protect terrace systems by diverting water from the top terrace where topography, land use, or land ownership prevents terracing the land above.
- Intercept surface and shallow subsurface flow.
- Reduce runoff damages from upland runoff.
- Reduce erosion and runoff on urban or developing areas and at construction or mining sites.
- Divert water away from active gullies or critically eroding areas.
- Supplement water management on conservation cropping or stripcropping systems.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This applies to all cropland and other land uses where surface runoff water control and or management is needed. It also applies where soils and topography are such that the diversion can be constructed and a suitable outlet is available or can be provided.

CRITERIA

Capacity. Diversions as temporary measures, with an expected life span of less than 2 years, shall have a minimum capacity for the peak discharge from the 2-year frequency, 24-hour duration storm.

Diversions that protect agricultural land shall have a minimum capacity for the peak discharge from a 10-year frequency, 24 -hour duration storm.

Diversions designed to protect areas such as urban areas, buildings, roads, and animal waste management systems shall have a minimum capacity for the peak discharge from a storm frequency consistent with the hazard involved but not less than a 25-year frequency, 24-hour duration storm. Freeboard shall be not less than 0.3 ft.

Design depth is the channel storm flow depth plus freeboard, where required.

Cross section. The channel may be parabolic, V-shaped, or trapezoidal. The diversion shall be designed to have stable side slopes.

The ridge shall have a minimum top width of 4 feet at the design depth. The ridge height shall include an adequate settlement factor.

The ridge top width may be 3 feet at the design depth for diversions with less than 10

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#) or visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#).

NRCS-VT
MARCH 2007

acres drainage area above cropland, pastureland, or woodland.

The top of the constructed ridge at any point shall not be lower than the design depth plus the specified overfill for settlement.

The design depth at culvert crossings shall be the culvert headwater depth for the design storm plus freeboard.

Grade and velocity. Channel grades may be uniform or variable. Channel velocity shall not exceed that considered non-erosive for the soil and planned vegetation or lining.

Maximum channel velocities for permanently vegetated channels shall not exceed those recommended in the NRCS Engineering Field Handbook (EFH) Part 650, Chapter 7, or Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Agricultural Handbook 667, Stability Design of Grass-Lined Open Channels (Sept. 1987).

When the capacity is determined by the formula $Q = A V$ and the V is calculated by using Manning's equation, the highest expected value of "n" shall be used.

Location. The outlet conditions, topography, land use, cultural operations, cultural resources, and soil type shall determine the location of the diversion.

Protection against sedimentation.

Diversions normally should not be used below high sediment producing areas. When they are, a practice or combination of practices needed to prevent damaging accumulations of sediment in the channel shall be installed. This may include practices such as land treatment erosion control practices, cultural or tillage practices, vegetated filter strip, or structural measures. Install practices in conjunction with or before the diversion construction.

If movement of sediment into the channel is a problem, the design shall include extra capacity for sediment or periodic removal as outlined in the operation and maintenance plan.

Outlets. Each diversion must have a safe and stable outlet with adequate capacity. The outlet may be a grassed waterway, a lined waterway, a vegetated or paved area, a grade stabilization structure, an underground outlet, a stable watercourse, a sediment basin, or a combination of these practices. The outlet must convey runoff to a point where outflow will not cause damage. Vegetative outlets shall be

installed and established before diversion construction to insure establishment of vegetative cover in the outlet channel.

The release rate of an under ground outlet, when combined with storage, shall be such that the design storm runoff will not overtop the diversion ridge.

The design depth of the water surface in the diversion shall not be lower than the design elevation of the water surface in the outlet at their junction when both are operating at design flow.

Vegetation. Disturbed areas that are not to be cultivated shall be seeded as soon as practicable after construction. [All diversions shall be stabilized with an erosion control matting such as jute netting, straw mats, plastic netting, or other type of matting or fabric. Erosion control matting shall be biodegradable and be properly anchored in accordance to manufacturer's specifications. At a minimum, the erosion control matting shall be installed along the center one third of the diversion the entire length.](#)

Lining. If the soils or climatic conditions preclude the use of vegetation for erosion protection, non-vegetative linings such as gravel, rock riprap, cellular block, or other approved manufactured lining systems may be used.

Site Preparation. [Areas to be excavated and areas to be occupied by spoil shall be cleared of trees, brush and other debris and organic matter as required for construction and maintenance.](#)

Construction. [The diversion shall be built to the grade and dimensions shown on the plans. Irregularities in section width causing poor flow conditions or appearance shall not be permitted.](#)

[The topsoil may be saved to spread on the newly constructed diversion to facilitate the establishment of vegetative cover. Where this is done the diversion shall be over excavated to allow for placement of topsoil without encroaching on the design cross section.](#)

CONSIDERATIONS

A diversion in a cultivated field should be aligned and spaced from other structures or practices to permit use of modern farming

equipment. The side slope lengths should be sized to fit equipment widths when cropped.

At non-cropland sites, consider planting native vegetation in areas disturbed due to construction.

Maximize wetland functions and values with the diversion design. Minimize adverse effects to existing functions and values. Diversion of upland water to prevent entry into a wetland may convert a wetland by changing the hydrology. Any construction activities should minimize disturbance to wildlife habitat. Opportunities should be explored to restore and improve wildlife habitat, including habitat for threatened, endangered, and other species of concern.

On landforms where archeological sites are likely to occur, use techniques to maximize identification of such sites prior to planning, design, and construction.

Temporary berms can be used effectively to divert water away from the newly constructed while establishing vegetation and removed after one growing season.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specification for installing diversions shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

All ditches or gullies not filled and undesirable trees and other obstructions not removed before construction begins shall be part of the diversion construction. The diversion shall be constructed to planned alignment, grade, and cross section.

If underground conduits are located under diversion ridges, mechanical compaction or water packing should be required. Installation and backfill of conduit trenches shall be made in advance to allow adequate settlement. The materials used for the inlet and conduit shall be suitable for the purpose intended and shall meet the requirements for Subsurface Drains (606). Diversion ridges constructed across gullies or depressions shall be compacted sufficiently to keep settlement within tolerable limits.

The surface of the finished diversion shall be reasonably smooth and present a workmanlike appearance.

Topsoil should be stockpiled and spread over excavations and other areas to facilitate revegetation. If vegetation is needed, seedbed preparation, seeding, fertilizing, liming and mulching shall be in accordance with Practice Code 342, Critical Area Planting.

The diversion shall be built to the grades and dimensions shown on the plans. Reverse grade shall not be permitted. The constructed ridge section of the diversion shall equal or exceed the design section both in width and elevation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance plan shall be prepared for use by the client. The plan shall include specific instructions for maintaining diversion capacity, storage, ridge height, and outlets.

The minimum requirements to be addressed in the operation and maintenance plan are:

1. Provide periodic inspections, especially immediately following significant storms.
2. Promptly repair or replace damaged components of the diversion as necessary.
3. Maintain diversion capacity, ridge height, and outlet elevations especially if high sediment yielding areas are in the drainage area above the diversion. Establish necessary clean-out requirements.
4. Each inlet for underground outlets must be kept clean and sediment buildup redistributed so that the inlet is at the lowest point. Inlets damaged by farm machinery must be replaced or repaired immediately.
5. Redistribute sediment as necessary to maintain the capacity of the diversion.
6. Vegetation shall be maintained and trees and brush controlled by hand, chemical and/or mechanical means.
7. Keep machinery away from steep sloped ridges. Keep equipment operators informed of all potential hazards.